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**MOGAN CULTURAL CENTER
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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

LAOTIAN SECRET WAR EXHIBIT

**INFORMANTS: JOHN DARANIKONE, THONGSOUK DARANIKONE, AND
NALI DARANIKONE**

INTERVIEWERS: SARAH MORRISON AND MEHMED ALI

DATE: JANUARY 27, 2008

S = SARAH

T = THONGSOUK

J = JOHN

A = ALI

N = NALI

Tape 08.04

S: This is Sarah Morrison and Mehmed Ali interviewing John Daranikone and his wife

T: Thongsouk Daranikone on January 27, 2008 for the Laotian Exhibit. Can you just tell me where you were born?

J: Yes, my name is John Daranikone. First name is [Sisant] Daranikone. Yes, I changed after I got American citizen, I changed to John Daranikone. I live in Laos, [Kham Muang], Laos, and I was born in Laos in 1945.

S: What town?

J: [Kham Muang], Laos.

S: Okay.

[Sarah asks Ali how she should proceed in asking John and Thongsouk the questions. Ali suggests she do John first, then go back to Thongsouk]

S: When you were growing up did you move around, or did you stay in that area where you were born?

J: You mean in my country, or?

S: Umhm.

J: Yah, when I growing up I move around in my country. I turned my age thirteen years old, I be Monk. I'm going to be small Monk, you know. After I be small Monk about seven years. After that I live, and I am not Monk, because of the war come over you know, my country. You know that's why I have to do for my people. For the Laos people I go to the army.

S: Okay. How old were you when you went into the army?

J: Sixteen.

S: Sixteen.

J: Yes. Sixteen, seventeen, yah, something. [Wife is speaking to him in Laos]

S: What year was that in? About '60?

J: Yes, about sixteen (S: Around there), or around seventeen something.

S: And so what happened that you had to go and join the war?

N: [Speaking in Laos]

J: After that we go to army till to 1975. Communist take over you know, at that time. We escaped from Laos to Thai, stay in a camp, [Ou Buon] Camp for about six months. We come to the United States.

S: Now did you (--) What side did you fight for when you were in the army?

J: The side with, I'm the side for the King side, and we fight for, we fight the Communist side.

S: So the Loyal?

J: Yes, Laos Communist and the Vietnamese.

S: Uh huh, and where did you go? Did you go to different places?

J: Different country, different town, different province. Like I'm fighting from the middle to the north, Laos North, all the way down, go and come back.

S: So you went from the middle to the north, and then all the way down to the south?

J: Yes.

S: And then came back to the middle?

J: Umhm.

S: Over the course of ten years, fifteen years?

J: Yes.

S: Okay. And what was (--) Do you remember the name of the company you were with, you know, the troop you were with?

J: Oh yes, yes. My company is named (--) [Nali and John are speaking in Laos, having difficulty translating in English what they want to say]. 8th Battalion, or I don't know.

N: Company. Company. Military.

J: Yes, it's military, you know.

A: So the 8th, 8th Battallion?

J: Yah, military.

N: Yah, military.

A: Yup.

J: GM (N: Yah, GM Company), GM 12.

S: GM12?

J: Yah, Company 8th.

S: Okay. And you were with them for the whole time you were in the service?

J: Yes.

S: Now what was your job, your specific job? Did you have just one?

J: My job is a nurse.

S: A nurse?

N: Medics.

J: Medics.

N: Medics Operation.

J: Yah, my job. That's my job.

S: Now how did you get to be that? How did you get chosen for that? Did you have training? Did they take you aside and pick you and train you?

J: Before I go to that work you know I had to go to training. I go to study about six months, or one year, something like that.

N: For American side. Before Americans [unclear]. But when he go to the war the enemies are catching him and he go to jail and stay with enemy Communist for sixteen years. After that they come back, come back. And when the Communist win he comes back, come back with them. Now they get the people, the enemies, let them go. See like that. And he's still with them. He's thinking always want to go and like they stayed everywhere. Escaped to, after 1972, 74, 76?

J: In 1968 we got the, what do they call, WP?

A: POW?

J: Yah, POW.

S: Oh yah, prisoners of war.

J: I'm POW thirteen years.

A: Yah. And I'm sorry. You should introduce yourself, and your name. This is John's brother.

N: Oh, sorry.

A: No, no, that's fine. We want you to be. So just introduce yourself for the recording.

N: Oh, okay.

A: What's your name?

N: My name [Nali] Daranikone.

A: [Nali] Daranikone.

N: Yah, I'm his brother, [Sisant.]

A: Okay. Okay, great.

N: And we used to work together before. My brother, he go to school, the medic school, military infantry. I go to the war already, same place. After that I come back from the war, I stay in the Vientiane, this guy coming up? Where did he go? I go over there? Oh man, I go over there? Come back down. Because I go stay with American. I stay the Air Commando.

A: Air Commando?

N: Yah, Air Force, Air Commando, I work over there. I come back, go, come back, go, come back, go. Same place this guy go? Oh man, it's too dangerous! I don't know what I do. He signed already, he have to go, military. When he go they catch him. Go in jail. Oh, we, our family not happy they kept my brother. My own brother go too, but he's okay.

A: So John, tell us, you first went into the service and you trained to be a medic. Where did you train and who trained you?

J: Oh that's, I can tell the name you know, who trained. Like Doctor [Lam Lueng], right now he live in France.

A: He lives in France?

J: Yah, he's Captain. Yah, he's Captain, he trained me. You know, Doctor [Lam Lueng], he lives in France right now. After that he trained, they changed me to, in the front line. Yah, we had to stay in the front line. 1966 we moved me to the north, North Laos. That's why North Laos is closed to China, and close to Vietnam, the border. We fight over there you know, about three months over, three months over, you know, we lost. Yah, we lost. A lot of people they get caught over there. A lot of people get killed over there. You know we lost. After that I, that's why I say I got the WPO.

A: POW.

J: OPW, yah, OPW about thirteen years in the north. Take me go to stay in the north. 1970, '72 I go to another north again, they sent me to the north, the border. That's the real border in the Vietnamese, north. They stay there about, yah, eleven years over there stay there eleven years. After that I'm escape from Laos, north to Vientiane with my friends, eleven people. We got the one car. We steal one car and eleven people come together, you know. We come, 1977 we escape to the Thailand.

A: Maybe you can tell a little bit about the battles you were in before you were captured, and then the battle leading up to your capture, and whatever detail that you can remember?

J: Province Phongsali, yah, Province Phongsali, and then North Laos border, the China border and Vietnamese border, over there and I stay there.

A: Is there a certain battle you remember distinctly, or the first time you went to battle, what your thoughts were, what you saw?

J: I saw just you know, Vietnamese people army, and they take over you know, around and in the camp, went in camp and in the jail. [Children around, noisy] Vietnamese people, and some Vietnamese, ten people for the Chinese people, about like ten army Chinese come over put around in the camp. You know, because a lot of people you know, a lot, well about 800 people. 800, oh no, 1800 people they brought POW. 1800 people over there in the Phongsali Province.

A: Phongsali Province?

J: Yes. No, never, never, never hear about American go around. I never hear that. I can see nobody, you know, because if you live in the jungle. All the jungle stay in the jungle, you know. Nobody, no people, no people, they grab people come around there, you know, just only Vietnamese army around it. You can't go nowhere.

A: So when you were a medic what did you experience as a medic? Were you helping people that were shot, or (--)

J: Yah, people in the army got shot. That's why I have experience. You know, like sometime the [mine] or something, you know, but no have the doctor, you know, come. Well we have to do myself, you know, something. And my friend took care of the [cut that out], or like something you know, that get cut over here, we do it. I do it myself, or something like that for them, you know. Or sometimes they get killed on the front line. They have to go pick it up there and come back.

A: Did you see a lot of people get hurt and killed?

J: Oh yah, yah!

A: What kind of injuries?

J: Yah, sometime you know, the head, you know, bullet shot in the head. Sometime the arm, the cut in the arm. Most in the arm and head, something.

A: In the head?

J: Yah.

A: And some people die?

J: Yah, die. Die a lot.

A: What kind of medicine did you have? What were you, what were your (--)

J: Oh we have just sometimes to stop the blood run and for the infection or something like that, you know, we have to do that. And novocain, or [make a note] pain or something, you know, you do something. Tie them up with a wire or something like that you know give them, after that they move them to the hospital.

A: Okay. Were you scared going near the battle?

J: You know, yes, scared, but you have to do it you know. [Laughs] Scared, but we have to do it, you know. But the young, you know, they young, but not really you know. Sometime we have to do the job, you know, [they young] you know. He's scared. He's scared.

S: So you had medicines and things with you, did you have weapons as well? So if anything happened you could, you know, take care of yourself? Did you have a gun maybe, or something like that, right.

J: Oh yah! Oh yah, yah, yah. We have gun, we have grenades, everything, yah. We have the gun. We have the medicine.

S: Hm, you had a lot to carry, right?

J: Yah, yah, yah. [Sometime] a lot of people you know, get hurt too much. We call the helicopter you know, go pick it up. Sometime the army come, you know, the pilot, the pilot they go to pick it up.

A: They go, they went to pick up Laos soldiers?

J: Oh yah, yah, yah, [unclear].

A: To bring them to the hospital?

J: The hospital, yes.

A: Okay. I'm sorry, go ahead Sarah.

S: I was going to say, did they have like any tent setup type of thing, where you take the person and bring them to an area, or would you just go up to them and treat them where they were depending on (--)

J: Sometime they go pick it up in the frontline, but mostly you know, but they go pick up, helicopter go down, mostly they go pick it up. I saw that one my eye, you know, one helicopter, they get the [bomb], they get shot by the enemy.

A: And so the helicopter landed?

J: Yah, and they go down and they shoot you know, by the missile. I got my friend over there that, yah, two, three guys that go with the helicopter, American helicopter pilot you know, they're all, they're all gone over there you know. That's why after that we come back, we come back to the [unclear]. We come back the [unclear]. After finish about one day, today we go pick it up, or some people die over there, but I don't know how the body, they move to where. I don't know, four American, you know, two, three American over there on helicopter. But I don't know the names.

A: Yah. So the helicopter landed and then the Communist shot the helicopter and completely destroyed it?

J: Yah, yah,

S: Where was that?

J: In North Laos, in Louangphrabang.

A: Louangphrabang. Do you remember (J: Yah, Nam Bak, Louangphrabang), do you remember the exact area in Louangphrabang?

J: Yah, I think so, yah, because I got a lot of everything about this. My friend or whatever, we got a lot of everything.

A: What happened on the day you were captured? Do you remember? Do you remember? What I'd like you to do if you can, is tell the story of that day. You know, what happened in the morning, and then was there a fight going on, or what happened all the whole day?

J: Yah, we fighting, we fight all three months, you know, (A: Okay) we never stop. We fight all three months. Three months [unclear], I have to stay in the group by fifteen people I stayed that group. I go in [battle] by helicopter. You know they pick it up, go to that mountain, go pick up. Three months, three months we're fighting. You know after that, you know, because the Communist you know, they come in a lot. This side maybe China Army, you know, another side Vietnamese side about 70,000 army, you know. They come over. We have only 40,000, or 30,000, something like that you know. We lost. They fight, they fighting more, two, three company move together the same way you know, the same boat. By the T28, or T32 airplane you know, come the bomb, bomb in the back, you know, but, but can do nothing because a lot of enemy, you know. A lot of enemy on the jungle, like the wire, the phone wire, hundred wires. We cut, we cut all of them. We cut, we don't want them to contact together, you know. But they still, you

know, they have a lot. We [unclear]. Oh, one day you know, 3:00, 3:00 in the afternoon, you know, we got attacked from the enemy. That time we have about 1500 people, army, we're army. We go in the hole in there. They have the mountain this way, this way.

A: So you're down in the valley?

J: Yah, they [unclear] go down there. Over there they told me you know, after that people on the [unclear], they tell me about it. 1000 people die over there by the army by the side of the King, they die over there you know.

A: Out of 1500, 1000 people died?

J: Yah, yah, yah. You know a lot of people die. I'm lucky, I'm not die, not get hurt, no nothing, you know. [Laughs] That's why after I go seven day, no food, no nothing.

A: So this is the day, this is the time that you got captured?

J: Not yet. Seven days I go in the jungle, you know, go around jungle myself.

A: Just yourself? You by yourself, or?

J: My self and my friends, about 30 people, but they kill every day when we walk. They shoot, they attack, they shoot and they die. After that only one, only one me, you know, last one, last guy. I walk down to the, on the river, you know. I think I got to go to [drink,] you know, because I walk up the mountains, people they make the family in the mountain. I open that, like a warehouse, you know, they're stocking the rice over there. I go, but rice, not like rice over here, you know. I open the [T: Seeds] seeds, just take the seeds, [skin out,] put in my mouth, you know, but in my mouth you know, about ten or twenty, after that I bite it, I eat it. I feel better. Oh, I got to walk now to the mountain. Walk down to the water. I feel, I got nothing now. I say, "Okay, let them kill me." That's it. They stop me, "Stop!" They say, "Stop." I say, "Okay, go ahead, come on." There are some they know, they speak Laos too. They say because [unclear], Vietnam right. They said, "Oh, you stay there!" No more. I, no more. They take me, they tie them up, they bring, go to camp where my friend. When I go over there I saw my friend a lot over there! I got a lot. "Oh, you come, you not die?" They say, "Yah, I say, I don't die." I seen my friends a lot over there.

A: So you're in a group of 1500 people, (J: Yes) and everyone else is killed, or captured?

J: Yah, a lot. Cap a lot too.

A: Captured a lot.

J: They cap a lot because too many company. Too many company I think, 40,000 people, army, you know. They cap 1800 people. They cap that time 1800 people.

A: Now you said when you were moving in the helicopter, was it Laos people, pilot the helicopter? (J: Yes) And where was the helicopter from?

J: From Louangphrobang. From, most from Louangphrobang.

A: Okay.

J: Yah, Louangphrobang.

A: And were they American made?

J: Helicopter American made, but the Laos pilots.

A: Okay. Okay. And when you were captured, who were you captured by, the Laos Communist?

J: No, Vietnamese Communist.

A: The Vietnamese Communist?

J: Yes. (A: Okay) Vietnamese Communist.

A: Sarah, why don't you ask him, continue about that, that discussion.

S: Okay. So then what happened after? You said they took you in to the camp, and (--)

J: Oh, they bring to another camp for the, you know, the POW. They make already you know, about six, seven camp over there. They bring down, they walk, walk too far you know, too far. They walk from Louangphrabang to I think, Phongsali, this land for the Phongsali, you know. They walk, go up there. We walk four day walk.

S: Four days?

J: Four day walk. Go up the mountain. Go down the mountain.

S: This is, are you going in the north? (J: Yes) Okay.

J: They stay there, four day walk.

S: Was it just your captures and you walking up there, or were there a whole bunch of people?

J: Me and my whole, my friends, whole army, we get caught.

S: Brought up there.

J: Yes, and they walk over there. But they tied them up. They tie, tie, tie, like wire tie, and they walk.

S: Everybody is connected together?

J: Yes, connected together, but we can't talk, nothing you know. You know, but you're tired, you fall down, you know. There are some people that get killed too. My friend got killed, one guy. He get sick, you know, he like when he got to the jungle you know, we lost. We got around in the jungle. We don't have no food for to eat. We tired. We fall down two, three times. They cut that out, the wire, they shoot. [Kick] down to the mountain. That's it.

A: What was his name, do you remember?

J: I don't remember, you know, because we know that on the way we get caught. Yah. And me too almost get killed too, me too. I'm get sick, I can't walk, you know. I say, "No kill me." I say, "No kill me." They walk at night, I can see my eyes not good, you know, walk at night. I can't see. You know, they yell at me. I say, "I can't see nothing," you know. They say, "Why are you, you find me. How you know, you find me?" [Laughing] They say it like that. "How you know you find me? You can see, you walk at night." Yah, I say, "I can see." [Unclear], "You want to stay here?" "No," I say, "No, I don't want to stay here." But you say, "Yes" they're going to kill you over there. "No, I don't want to stay here." I say, "I'm lucky," you know, "I'm lucky."

S: Did they warn you? Did they say if you speak then we'll shoot you? If you can't walk we'll shoot you? Or did they just (--)

J: Yah, then my friend you know, they hold me. My friend hold me walk, you know, together. They say, "You have to take care." My friend take care of me, and I take care of myself. You know that's why. About a week walk. About a week. Step by step walk, you know, slowly, you know tired, that's why. [Laughs]

S: So what happened when you finally made it to the next area?

J: After we get in the camp? (S: Umhm) Nothing. We stayed there. We don't have no food to eat, only leaves and that food, you know, we don't care.

A: You eat the leaves?

J: Yah! No good outside. [Unclear] I eat too. I eat too. Most people, 75 people die for the no food.

Son: It was starvation. Call it starvation.

J: When you go, you know, go to the bathroom, or something like that, all the bloods come out. 75 people [on my eye], you know, they die by no food, no nothing.

S: Did you know what you could eat and what you couldn't? Were there certain things that were poisonous?

J: Yah, we know that. Like the leaves, we have to eat, you know. Yah, we eat. We eat.

A: What kind of plants did you eat?

J: Oh, I don't know. A lot of thing you know. Ali, a lot of things, the leaves we eat. A lot of things.

S: Trees and things.

J: Like [bond], you know [bond]?

N: Like a salad leaf, you can eat it.

J: Yah, itching too, you know, put the salad on. You got to itching you know, to hold it.

A: You got itching?

J: But thank God, you know, God help. You know, that's why, you know, no itching, no nothing, you know. We no have that. Where did we get that salad, you know, put the food altogether. No, over there.

A: What year were you captured?

J: 1968.

A: 1968, Okay.

J: Yah, 1968.

S: What did you do for water? Did they give you water at all, or you had to [unclear]?

J: Water, like the Merrimack River. [Laughs] You know, water, yah, like that. That's it.

?: Like a pond, or stream, or something?

?: Yah, stream, pond.

J: Like the Merrimack, [similar], but [similar] like Merrimack River, you know. Yah.

S: So were you all, you and the rest of your friends who made it, were you all separated? Were you each in a different spot where you couldn't talk, or see each other?

J: Yes, they separate. Like you got [unclear], big [unclear], you know, like a big guy. You know, there's another camp, they stay on that. Like us, regular army, you know, we stay together, you know, but they stay inside the camp with us too, you know. They're around, you know, something. They talk. We have to learn. After that one month they give you to study, learn about politic, or something. About [unclear] United States. [Unclear], they yell, say "United States." [Laughing] You know, you have to yell with them! "That United States no good!" They tell, you have to say to them, yah. I say it too. "Oh, United States. American no good. American bad." Then they tell them that you know.

N: Protect yourself!

J: Yes, I protect myself. I say, "American bad!" Yah, them bad, you know. [All laughing]

S: Of if you didn't say that (--)

J: Yah, they make the war. Yah, they say, "They make the war and kill my people!" You know, "Yah, yah!" You have to say yah with them, you know, but you not say that you got trouble too.

S: So you had to go along with what they told you, what they [unclear].

J: What they tell, you know!

A: Did anybody fight them? Did anybody (S: Like go against them) disagree with them?

J: I don't think so, you know, but we can do nothing, you know. Yah, we can do nothing, nobody. Nobody can do nothing. We have to do. Yah, you have to do. You have to be quiet. You have to be good boy, you know. Yah, if you were no good boy they call you at night! Yah, they call you at night. Go over, yah, go to the office. What they do, I don't know? No come back.

A: Really.

J: Yah! They say, "You want to go to study long, long term?" If you go study long term, forget it. You can see nobody.

N: [Laugh] No come back!

J: They got killed right there.

A: So did you know anybody that disappeared like that?

J: Yah. There's another one, he's Colonel, Colonel [Pilai] his name. Colonel [Pilai], he got killed over there too.

A: What happened to him?

J: They say he's thinking about America, you know, like that, because he's mixed up, you know. They think he's going to escape with about ten people, you know, something. They talk together, something. But I don't know about his, you know. They put the small room, sink down in that you know, you can't stand up. Small, small. Nobody see him. Nobody know him, only me. I'm special you know. They tell me to bring the food to him, little bit food to give to him. I give to him, he say, sometime he talk to me you know. He say, "Oh, if you go to Vientiane, or go over there you tell my wife, okay, I'm over here, but I'm going to die, okay." He say, he's saying that. But after that, the second time he tried to escape again. They kill him.

S: He tried to escape?

J: Yes, they kill him. He have the friend, stay together, about four, five people stay together. They kill all. I think they kill all. After that I moved to the Sam Nua. They kill him in Phongsali in 1979, something. [Thongsouk corrects him] Oh, oh, 1969, 69, sorry, 1969. His name [Pilai]. Big shot, but not my, not my boss, you know.

A: Was he an officer in the Laos army, or?

J: Yah, he's Laos army, yah.

A: Was he an officer?

J: He's like a company, like a big shot for the company, 400, 500 people.

A: Big shot? (J: Yes) Commander or something?

J: Yah, the Colonel, you know.

A: Colonel?

J: Yah.

A: Okay.

J: Colonel, he's a big shot.

S: I was going to ask you, did they give you any jobs when you were there? Did they make you (--) What did they make you do?

J: Yah, yah, [unclear] I got my job. My job is a good job, you know, like what you call that (N: Oh medic?) medic again (S: Again) over there. Medic again. You know that time I stayed at the camp, six months I got malaria. You know, I get sick a lot, like in my head. My hand like that, you know.

A: Your hand shaking because of malaria?

J: Yah, and afternoon 4:00 I start, cold, something, you know, and my hair all gone. Thank God the guy, you know, I don't know the Laos guy, he's Communist side, he saw me you know. He say, "You get sick? You [unclear] before? I say, "Yah, I say, yah." He take me go to stay in the hospital, you know.

A: For the Communist side.

J: Yes. [Unclear] all the people you know, over there you know. That's why I saw a lot of people die.

S: How long were you there for in the hospital?

J: How long? Till to 1975.

S: In the hospital?

J: Yes. I work with the, stay hospital with the Vietnamese too, you know? That's why.

A: So you helped to take care of the Vietnamese and Laos?

J: No. Only Laos POW.

A: Okay. Did you help to take care of the Laos soldiers that were hurt?

J: Yes, yes.

A: The Communist soldiers?

J: No.

A: No. And you said you were moved a couple of times to different POW camps?

J: Yes. Moved to Sam Nua. You know Sam Nua? In Laos North, this side Sam Nua, Phongsali, this side. Like north and south, something like that you know. Sam Nua, long stay there, long, long stay there.

S: So when you went to the hospital, they took you there, you were sick yourself, right?

J: Oh at that time, yah. At that time we get sick, they move me, stay in the hospital, you know.

S: So they made sure you got better. Who took care of you?

J: I got better for the eat, you know. The doctor over there, you know they like me, you know. They give me the food, enough the food, penicillin.

A: Penicillin?

J: Yah.

S: Who treated you? A Laotian?

J: Yah, he's Laos, but Laos, like Laos Khmu, or something like that. They guy, he's like Laos Khmu, this doctor.

S: Oh okay.

A: What did you say, Laos what?

J: Laos Khmu. (A: What's that?) You know Laos Khmu.

A: Is that a kind of Laos people?

J: Kind of the Laos people, but Laos, we have three kind, you know? Laos [Soung] right? Okay. Laos [Loung], like us, and Laos Theung, they call that Laos Theung. They have the speak Laos Theung, and they speak Laos too, but sometime they speak Laos not well, you know, just speak Laos Theung. You know, the guy, the doctor you know, he's Laos Theung. We call Laos Theung, Laos Khmu.

A: And are those people that live in the north?

J: Yes. Yah, doctor Communist.

N: Because he's in the prison already.

J: Yah, he's learned from Vietnam. (N: They catch him already) I don't know, they look at my story, why I have to work with them. They look my story, you know. I don't make trouble when I stay in the camp. I don't make trouble, and they look, because they have, we write about our story, like my experience, what I do before, something like that. They say, "Oh, okay, maybe this guy is good." They think like that, you know, they give me work with them.

S: How did they get your story? Did they talk to you? Did they interview you, ask you when they brought you to camp? They asked everybody?

J: Oh yah, yah. They come in the camp, you know, yah, yah, like office people, you know. They come, they write out the paperwork with them, you know.

S: What kind of questions did they ask you?

J: Oh, they ask a lot. They ask so many things you know. One thing they say, "How many house you burn?" "How may people you kill?" [Nali laughs] "You order like a F105 [unclear] kill people?" They ask so many thing you know, about killing. You know there's so many things. But we say, "No." We say, "No." That's it.

N: They [few words unclear] United Nation they [unclear] on the medics, doctor, everything, they don't complain, because we not kill people, we help people. That's why he's there. That's why he (--)

S: So they didn't do much to you because [unclear].

J: But we have to be careful you know.

N: Everywhere like that.

S: Because you still had some (--)

J: The Communist really [unclear], you know. If you left on a boat with them, we see that he had an [airplane], they fly over, you know. We look, and then look, all [airplane]. Oh, forget it. You, you're going to call the office right away. Everybody see you, yah!

A: Even if an airplane is coming over, even if you look at the airplane, (J: Yah, I'm looking like that, yah) they're going to take you to the office.

J: Yah, you miss him, you call them, to come to take you, or something like that. You spy or something, everything, you know. We're here, here, in here they said, "No look at them." [Laughs] "No look them, yah." No look, yah, no look at them.

S: So you were there from 60s into the 70s, right, in this camp?

J: Till '75.

S: Yah, you were there for a long time.

J: Yah, long time, yah.

S: Okay. Now when the whole Secret War was going on, and then bombs were being dropped, you know, along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, did you know about that at that time?

J: I don't know about this. I don't know about this, yah. I don't know.

S: Did you hear the bombing at all, and just think it was part of the war that had been going on?

J: I don't know either about this. I don't know about this.

S: So it wasn't talked about at all?

J: Yah, no, they don't talk about the war. They just talk about Lam Son. You know, Lam Son 719.

S: 719?

J: Yah, it by you know, the [unclear] people to put army, go to Vietnamese, go to Vietnam, they know that. For the war, Lam Son 719. You know, Lam Son 719?

A: No, what's that?

J: Route 9. Route 9. 719.

A: What is that?

J: That's Lam Son, like Route 9. (N: North Vietnam and the South) North and South Vietnam, Laos, American, Thailand, and Laos fight at the same time. You know, fight north, north [unclear] for the fight. They call that 719 and Route 9.

A: Okay. Was this the Neutral group led by the Colonel?

J: No. That's the whole group, the whole crowd.

N: [Unclear], north, north, south [throw up] to fight in the front, in the border. That time we want to clear.

J: American and Thailand, you know, they come over to fight for the north.

N: They want to clear up fight at that time, you know.

J: This is the side of the Ho Chi Minh Trail right. Ho Chi Minh Trail, this is Route 9 from the Laos. And going up over here, this is from South Vietnam. South Vietnam I think maybe four or five company for the [unclear], they come over. And Cambodian they come over too, they're fighting Communist over here. They're Communist Laos, Communist Vietnamese, and the most they say that Communist in China too that come over same time they fight, but [they order us] to them, you know. Sometime you know, they saw on the military [unclear] over here, you know. Some people when they hang on the helicopter. You know, helicopter go down, too heavy, too many people. [Unclear] in this war.

S: What year was that?

J: This is '72 about.

N: We stop fighting '72, '73 and they lost. [Same too] that I worked on Air Commando American, John Powers my leader, is come, "You guys have to go back." The government say [stop]. Everything have to go down. Take leader of Laos before work with American. They have to go to school to learn three or four months to protect themselves. They get to learn. You want to go to the United States, go stay with the [unclear]. American infantry we told everything throw out. There's a big fight already, you know, the people. The government over here say, "stop." If they don't say stop we [unclear]. The government over here say "stop." And over there in the front, oh man, quiet like that. Many time, that's why now the people in Laos they're escape United Nation, [unclear] United States [unclear]. People escape, die on the Mekong River, a lot too they kill. Civilian, they don't care. We escape from the Mekong River, from our country. They kill all, the kid, everything. [Unclear]. They don't care. They kill it.

J: [Comment unclear]

N: That's why we escape over here United States. And to now if there are change policy for the United States [unclear], or everywhere, the United Nations come and change policy in Laos, protection people. We want to come back. We enjoy, enjoy for the people in my country too. Like we love American, United States, we love your country too. All American love Laos people too. Never throw out. Yup. That's why we're happy.

A: John, when the war was coming to a close, what were your feelings? Do you remember finding out that the Royal Government was losing? Did you hear anything, or did you know what was happening?

J: We called the side together right, they're saying that. The King side, and the Communist side, they say they got to side together. They got [the same] like POW side of the King, and POW side of the Communist, they got the [same]. We have to you know. We think we got to see father and mother, see family, you know, like that. But after that, the Communist, they lie. They not change, you know. That's why, they not change.

A: They're no exchanged?

J: Yes!

A: Their prisoners?

J: Uh huh! They're just about 100 people. They let the handicap people, they bring down to the Vientiane. You know, but side of the Vientiane they, everyone you know,

they send back to Vietnam you know, for the Vietnam. Like us, or my friend, or thousand people you know, no way, no. They say, "No, don't go, you guys don't go. Stay here." That time [few words unclear] we happy. We really happy, you know, because we think we're going to see my father, my mother, or family, something, brother, sister. But after that, no, they lie. You know because they have eighteen what they call, eighteen (--)

N: Eighteen [unclear] they lose.

J: Yah, yah, they lose.

N: That was just nice, lose, the people would be happy! [Unclear].

J: We have to read to [to keep for everybody]. After we read that you know, we're happy, all the people happy, you know? After that they said again, they say no.

S: So what happened to you?

J: That's why I escaped, you know, like [unclear] people. I escaped. [Laughs].

N: Otherwise you get killed. You want to stay over there you get killed.

J: I steal a car. I steal a car and my friend, eleven people escape from the North Laos to the Vientiane.

A: So after the (--)

J: '77.

T: No, '76.

J: '76 we escape. Yah, '76.

A: So after, after the Communist really took over in '75, were you still in prison, or did they let you out of prison?

J: I'm, I'm still there. (A: In prison?) I'm there, but I come out already. I work outside already. They work outside.

T: Cannot come home.

J: You cannot come home. That's it.

T: Just work for them over there.

A: So you have to stay. You're not really a prisoner, but you have to stay where you are?

J: Yah, yah, yah.

Son: Like a work release.

J: They let the prisoners work outside you know, on the contracts and like that.

N: Prisoners, okay, you be good, work outside, like that you know.

A: And but you still stayed, at night time you still stayed in a prison camp?

J: No. No, outside.

A: Outside, and where?

J: In the house. (A: In a house?) Yes, in the house.

A: And were you in a village, or in a city up there?

J: No, no city. No city. No, everything, no nothing.

A: No electric?

J: Yah, yah, just make the small camp, small camp, you know, that's it, in the wood.

A: In the woods. And you're still doing medical?

J: Huh?

A: You're still doing medical stuff?

J: Yes.

A: Okay. And so then you decided, in what month did you decide to leave?

J: To leave from them?

A: Yes.

J: Um, 1976, I think February.

A: February? (J: Yes) Okay.

J: By my friend, eleven people.

A: Okay. Sarah, do you want to pick up that story?

S: So that's when you (--) How did (--) The car, how did you come about stealing a car you said?

J: We steal the car.

S: So how did you do that? Was that (--)

J: Now how did that, steal the car?

S: Is that the town where you were?

J: I know how to drive the car. I know how to drive the car. I [unclear]. I have one guy that's good mechanic. He's good, very good mechanic. He [unclear] now everything you know. We don't have a key, you know, he got it started. And then we go, we steal, get in the warehouse for the gun, for the weapon, everything, we got eleven gun. Then we escaped.

S: So you and ten other people? Eleven of you total? (J: Yah) Got in this car? You all fit in the car?

J: Yes, like a big car, like a pop army truck, you know. (S: Okay) Like a Hummer, something like that.

A: Okay.

J: But Russian car.

A: A Russian car.

J: Yah, Russian car, army, you know.

A: Russian truck.

J: Yup, truck. Four wheel you know, [unclear] the four wheel.

S: So where did you go from there?

J: I go from Sam Nua to Xiang Khuang, Xiang Khuang to Vientiane.

S: Were you working your way south, or which direction?

J: Yah, from north to south.

S: North to south?

J: Yah, they just call their order and they say, one army, Communist Army, three to five people one car. They follow us. They try to catch us. (A: Really?) You know, yes. After that we go to Xiang Khuang, we have the mountains. Like that you know we go, I drive that time, I'm almost get killed by my friend kill me too, you know. (A: Why?) Because [unclear] right? We went, we put the four wheel, you know. We have to push clutch foot you know, to move four wheel, yeah! (A: Push the clutch) After the car go up like that I put the clutch, pull the four wheel, they're not working you know. The car back up like that, you know. I turn like that, the car, we get accident, but nobody get hurt! The car go down like that.

A: It fell on its side?

J: Yes. Oh, what we going to do now? We can do nothing. We can turn the car back. We didn't do nothing. My friend you know, you go get, send the truck, tractor that make the road. The Vietnamese work over there. "You go get the truck. Need help from Vietnamese people over there." Ah, I say, "I don't know. Okay. Okay, I go. I go ask them, I need help from them." They don't know we escape, you know. They don't know. They come, "Okay, okay, I help you." Vietnamese, they come, the turn my car back. My friend mechanic, good mechanic, he checked everything, all everything, you know. After it start we say, "Thank you." We go again. [All laugh] Yah, that's right. They come, they follow, you know, but they can't catch us.

S: So they were following you.

J: Yah.

S: But you never saw them because they weren't close enough.

J: No. (S: Wow) After that we get in Xiang Khuang. Oh we scared, you know, we scared a lot. We get in Xiang Khuang, we stop there, but they don't know. Nobody know, you know. After that in night time we go visit my friend. They work over there too. All my friends they same, same employee. They say, "Oh, how you guys get in here." "Oh, we come to work over here," or something like that. After that they eat, or something, rice something, then we escape again. [To many talking in background-very loud]

A: I'm sorry, can you say that again? Can you say that last sentence again so we can hear it?

J: Ah, Xiang Khuang, yah, we stopped there yah. (A: Okay) Another province, you know. From the Sam Nua to Xiang Khuang, we stopped there one night. We stop over there. After we stopped there we go visit my friend over there. They work employee, you know for over there. They leave some rice, or something they give to eat. We go to Vientiane at night.

A: In the same truck?

J: In the same truck. The same truck.

A: And you never met any soldiers on the way?

J: On the road, yah, we met, but they don't know, you know. Because that time the Communist they don't have phone or something, you know. Yah, they don't have phone. But they have phone, forget it you know, we'd get killed you know.

S: Did they stop you at all?

J: No, nobody stop.

S: They just let you go, let you through.

J: Yah.

S: Now why were you working your way down?

J: Way down to Vientiane? (S: Yah) Yah, we go see the one guy, he's minister. His name [Singapo]. He's a big guy, you know, minister in the Laos, in Communist Government. After that we get to Vientiane, we go see him. We say, "We escaped from Sam Nua, come over here." "Why you guys escape?" he asked. "We don't like over there. Long time we stayed there. We want to see the family over here." He believe us. You know, he say, "Okay, I talk to them," I talk to like the president, or whatever you know. He say, "Okay, you guys stay here. No go nowhere." That's why the guy, you know, [unclear] for us, everything. "You guys no matter, go to jail, no nothing. You know, stay here, I keep you guys" He keep us, eleven people, yah.

S: Oh, he took care of you for awhile? (J: Yah) For how long?

J: Till 1979 I go away from him. I go the south, stay in my province. Two year I stayed with him. Two years.

S: Two years? (J: Yeah) Wow.

A: What year did you escape? (J: From Laos?) From the north to the Vientiane.

J: 1966. No, no, no, 1976.

A: 1976, Okay.

J: Yah, 1976, August. 1976 escape north to that. We escape to Laos, to Thai, '89. No.

T: '76, '77 we get married and we stay in your town, Tha Khaek, you know, [Kham Muong] for two year or something. (J: 1979) And then we skip Laos to Thailand 1980.

J: 80 or 79?

T: No, 1980.

J: 80?

S: When did you guys, when did you two meet and where?

T: 1977 in Vientiane.

S: In Vientiane.

J: We move fast. [Laughs]

A: This might be a good time that maybe we can talk about your early time and bring you up so then you can talk about how you guys met. And one thing you want to make sure to do is get the family history too.

S: Family history?

A: The genealogy.

S: Oh yah, yah, I have to go back to that, yah. Should I do that for him now?

A: Do it now and then you can go to her and do the same thing.

S: Okay. All right. So if I could just back track. Let's see. When you were a kid did you go to school?

J: Yes.

S: You did. Now how old were you?

J: To go to school [he's thinking, not sure]. About seven year old, or eight year old you go to school.

S: Seven, or eight? And for how long? How many years did you go through?

J: I go to school in the [unclear] three year, four year. After that I go to (N: To the Monk) a Monk. Seven year I go to school for the Monk.

N: He learned the Monk.

S: For a Monk?

J: Like a King.

S: Oh, okay.

Son: He became a Monk.

S: Now how, yah how did you, why did you do that I guess? (J: The Monk?) Yah.

J: You call the Monk, you know, be my family, the big family. You know, I have to go sometime that I like, I like want to be the Monk. You know, like I believe the Buddha or something that, and my father he's a Monk too before, and go to school too. If you go to Monk you very good school you know, and protect you, everything. You're like [Yosomite], or something, you know, good for everything. You know, [unclear] or something, yah, that's very good.

N: Yah, Monk is good.

J: That's why you know. Yah, that's why I go to be Monk. Seven year I go learn about the bible of the Monk, about Buddha or the Monk, or something like that.

S: Now where was that? Was that in your village, or?

J: In my hometown.

S: In your hometown.

J: You know, hometown for four year. After that I go to the big city, like a province, they had the school over there.

S: Did you live there like a boarding house?

J: Yah, we live, they live in a Temple.

S: Oh okay.

J: Yah, live on the Temple.

S: So did you get to practice as a Monk, or did the war interfere with that?

J: What you mean? [Son translates question] I studied by the Monk. After that the war come over before, but I'm still Monk. I'm a Monk at that time you know. When I get out from the Monk they call. You have to go to army.

S: Okay.

J: You know they younger, when they go younger, younger you know, I want to go to army too you know.

S: Oh you did?

J: Yes. That's why I quit the Monk and go to army.

S: Why did you want to go to the army?

J: Why I want to go? (S: Umhm) My country. I love my country. Yah, I love my hometown, you know. I no want the people to change. Like we don't know the Communist bad or good, you know, but they say Communist bad. That's why you know, we don't like it if Communist bad. We just all the movie, something like that you know, when we young, look movie. Communist, oh kill father, kill mother, kill family. That's why, oh no, but you stay home, nothing. You have to go to fight for the land.

S: Where did you see those movies?

J: In Laos, you know, they have the movie all the time.

S: In town?

J: Yah, in town, you know, in the village. People come for to make movie you know. And they for free. (S: For free) For free, yah, for free.

S: What did your parents do for work?

J: My father you know, my father work for the farmer. My mother worked for the farmer. My father, he had the children, seven children. All boys. (S: All boys?) Yes, like the first one, second one, second one go to army. Third one stay home and get married. Fourth one army, and [none of my brothers]. You not come with me [unclear], and this one and me, and my younger brother, and last four or five years he come to United States. Come to see me, you know. Today he come back home.

S: What are your parents names?

J: My father name [Teet Phan]. Name [Teet] mean the [Teet], he's a big Monk before. He's a big Monk. [Teet], like a Master. Yah, he Master of the Monk.

S: Oh Master?

J: Yes, Master, you know. He know a lot of thing about Buddha. You know, they called him Master. Mother name Lom. (S: Lom?) L O M, yah.

A: L O M?

J: L O M.

A: What does that name mean?

J: Name mean Lom. Lom like around, you know, like I don't know. Lom mean like around all good things around her, or something like that, yah.

A: Good things around the person?

J: Yah, yah, yah, yah.

A: And is that a Laos name?

J: Laos name.

A: Was that also a Cambodian name?

J: I don't know about Cambodia, no. This is Laos name like that you know.

A: My daughter's name is Lom.

J: Yah. (A: Yah) [Bou] Lom, like a [Bou] Lom. [Bou] Lom mean the [unclear].

N: A lot of good things come for her.

A: A lot of good things come to her?

N: Oh yah, Lom means [unclear].

A: Means what?

N: Mean it's a [unclear] everything come to her, or to you if your name Lom, you know. If you name Lom a lot of people love you. Lom, means very good.

J: Yah, my mother, my mother the farm too. You know she got the seven children.

A: And could you say their full names if they have first names and a family name?

J: My father and my mother? (A: Yah) Full name of father, [Phan,] the full name. [Teet] means he's a Monk, you know. [Few words unclear] you got to take like a Master.

N: Master, he get first Master, like [unclear]

J: And my mother name, that's a real, real name, is nickname Lom. Real name [Syvay]. Syvay, S Y V A Y. (A: Okay)

N: Lom nickname, nickname.

J: Yah.

A: What's her family name John?

J: Huh?

A: What's her family name? The family name?

J: The family name?

A: So my family name (--)

J: Last name? (A: Yah) The last name something? Yah, Daranikone. [Son explains what Ali means about last name] I don't know. I don't know. Yah, I don't know. Most my people they don't have last names, my family name, you know that right? (A: Yah, yah) Yah. Like my father, we don't know too. Just Daranikone we think. Da mean my grandmother. (A: Okay) Okay? Ran, my grandfather, side of my grandfather. Da, my grandmother, side of my mother. We put together Daranikone. [Son speaks in Laos] We all the brother together, we talk about this.

N: Family meeting.

J: Yah, family meeting.

A: To decide on a last name?

J: Yes. (A: Okay) Before we get in the camp.

A: What year?

T: 1980

J: No, before that. I think 19 (--)

N: No, I came first. I came first one. I escape for Laos country 1976, August '76. I escape first.

J: Maybe 1977 or something like that.

N: Yah, '76 escape. I [was waiting] my brother. He stay in jail with Communist. I don't know where he go, where he is? My own brother they catch him, go in jail too. Both of them. Oh. And my brother, that one, he's [unclear]. He cannot do nothing. That's one [unclear] in jail too, because they are both military. They don't believe us, we

fight them back. They just kept on military, go in jail. I know I escape first. Before nobody. I go first. After that I [just wait] my brother. He's in the jail over there in Vietnam. I don't know where he is. I'm waiting. I stand by in Thailand. My own brother come. My younger brother come, he's escaped, come to me. That time Thailand take me, both of us go in jail in Thailand. They take me, him, my brother. They take go in jail. They both, they almost killed too. (A: Really) Yah, in Thailand they almost kill us too. Thai, they kill a lot of people too. They took me. They take the, a lot of T41 tank. They got T41 tank in Thailand? They got T41. [Unclear] go to the Mekong River to kill. The river, Mekong, take to the border, the [Nari].

A: So they attached you to the tank?

N: Yah, yah, in the tank. They get my brother first [unclear]. I escaped in nighttime because they took me 3:00. All my brother, he escape from Laos. He stayed with me only not one week yet. They know they think, this guy Communist, you know. [Laughs]

A: They think you were Communist John?

J: Yah.

N: He's scared. He's scared from Communist. That's why we come, both of us. They took, they asked me where do I work? What did you do before? I said, "I escape from Laos, I work with Americans," I say. I want to go American, I want to go in United States, I'm just waiting for my brother to come. I say, "Well I want my whole family go together." I say, "Oh, what do you do?" "I'm Air Commando. I'm doctor, American, Military, Air Commando Air Force, [unclear]." "Who is your boss?" I tell, "Oh, John Powell." If you want to know, I say John Powell and they work, we work for the United Nation. And then [unclear] ask my brother a question. This guy, this guy he go [unclear] in Thailand. [Unclear] And this guy, everything, we not [unclear], and they [stop us], leave us alone and we go to the camp.

A: Wow. So before you guys got together and decided on your last name, your family name, you didn't really have a family name before that?

N: No, no.

A: They just called you (--)

N: Because, yah, because own people in my country they have no ID. (A: Okay) No ID. They just have ID some I think who want to go another city, like want to go the Hong Kong. They make the ID card, the passport, something like that. The people in Laos country, no ID. Everywhere they want to go before.

J: Only my father right now on the paper, that's it. Piece of paper you know, they put on box something. Sometimes they lost. You know, the forgot what day the children

birthday, you know, they don't know too, you know, sometimes. Only father, mother, you know.

A: You want to continue with (--) We actually want to try to get your family history. So we try to find the names of everybody in your family. So.

S: Do you remember your grandparents names? (J: Huh?) Grandparents?

J: Oh grandparents name, grandfather name [La]. [La?]

N: We cannot remember. When we born they pass away already.

J: Yah, we born they pass away. (A: Okay) But just name the [La], but we didn't see them.

N: [Comment unclear].

A: Yah, yah. So that would be whose, which grandfather, which side?

J: Grandfather, father's side. (A: La?) Yah, La. (A: Okay, and?)

S: You don't know the grandmother?

J: Grandmother side and my mother, [Sada].

S: Sadat? (J: Yah) On your mother's side?

A: How about your mother's father?

J: Oh we don't know that. We don't know the name.

A: And how about your father's mother?

N: We don't know.

J: Just La, that's it. Just La.

A: Okay. So maybe, do you want to come up and we can talk to you a little bit?
[Speaking to Thongsouk]

S: Could you just introduce yourself again? Say your name?

T: My name Thongsouk Daranikone.

S: All right. So where and when were you born?

T: In Laos, Vientiane.

S: What year?

T: 1960.

S: 1960 you were born?

T: Umhm.

S: Okay. And did you live in the same area when you grew up, (T: Yes) or did you move around?

T: No, same area in Vientiane.

S: And that was a city, right? (T: Yes) Okay. Did you go to school?

T: Yes.

S: Yes. How old were you when you started?

T: Six year.

S: When you were six years old?

T: Yah, six year old, yah.

S: Until when?

T: Until 1974 I stopped school. So how many year? [Laughs] Not yet high school.

S: So, for like eight years then?

T: Umhm, nine years. Yah, I school nine years.

S: What did your parents do for work?

T: My father is a, he's a soldier.

S: He was? (T: Yah) In which army?

T: Yes, he's army. [J: Radio] Radio.

S: What's that?

T: How do you call English?

J: Do you know radio army?

A: The radio, the radio man?

J: Yes, radio, yah, radio man.

S: Oh, okay. Was he a Loyalist? Was he on the Loyalist side?

T: American side.

S: American side?

T: Yah, he's a [friend, friend] army before.

S: Oh okay. And what did your mom do?

T: Stay home, take care of the kids.

S: Raised the family? What are your parents names?

T: My father name [unclear]. My mom, [unclear].

S: Okay. And do you remember your grandparents names on either side?

T: My grandfather, my father's side [Tha, Mun Tha]. My grandmother I don't remember. I don't remember my grandmother, but my grandma's father, my grandfather my mother's side, his name is [Oun], yah Oun. And my grandma is [Toung].

S: Okay. Do you remember their last names?

T: [Sihalat].

S: [Sihalat]? (T: Yes) Okay. Did you have siblings? You know, brothers or sisters growing up?

T: My, I have all brother, sisters together (J: Fourteen [Laughs]) fourteen, but there are alive twelve.

A: Wow!

T: Twelve alive, yah.

A: Busy family.

T: Yah, big family.

S: So where were you in the line? Were you in (--)

T: The second one.

S: The second one? (T: Yah) Out of fourteen? (T: Umhm) Wow, and there's twelve still around.

A: And Sarah, probably what we want to do with her is ask her if she had any experiences with the war during that time, but then bring it up fairly quickly to the time that they met.

S: So you remember your great grandparents at all? Or did you ever hear about (--)

T: They're all gone. They all died.

S: Did your parents ever talk about them at all, your great grandparents, or no?

T: No.

S: No. Okay. Yah, so what was your childhood like growing up?

T: Student. (S: A student?) Yah. I don't, I don't [unclear] just student until the Communist coming.

S: Right. So what do you remember about that? What do you, what can you share about that time when the Communist came? How did your life change I guess, you know?

T: I think I'm still young at that time, you know.

S: Did you hear any fighting around you though?

T: No, no, no, there's no fighting. No.

S: No bombs or anything (T: No, no) during that time? What about when you were older, in the 70s? You didn't hear anything then either?

T: No.

S: No.

Son: She's from the city.

T: Because in the Capital, you know?

Son: Yah, she's in Capital, there's no war.

T: Nothing, you know.

S: So you didn't have any experiences with anyone you knew, like friends, or family?

T: No.

S: So you felt pretty safe growing up?

T: Before that time I grew my father, he's retired already.

A: He retired from the service?

T: Yah, yah. Umhm.

S: So you were just in a big family being raised by your parents basically, and going to school. (T: Yah) Okay. And well what did you, yah, what did you do for fun when you were a kid, do you remember? Playing any specific games, or.

T: I don't know. Oh know, I am [silibat], you know, like how you call?

J: Dancing.

T: Dancing.

J: Dancing, yah. She's dance student.

A: So you're a traditional dancer?

J: Yes, traditional dance.

T: Yah.

S: Oh yah.

A: Well you should start a school to teach the kids. Could you do that? I have money for that you know?

T: [Laughs] Getting old now.

A: So tell us how you guys met?

T: Oh that time he came to Vientiane, right, 1976 when you come Vientiane and then I meet him, I meet him 1977. Because that time I quit from school. That time I grow already, you know, sixteen, seventeen. I quit from school and then I go work, and I meet him.

Son: [Unclear], graduate, graduate school.

S: You quit school? Why?

T: No I quit. I'm not finish, I quit.

J: [Unclear] high school.

T: [Unclear] high school. I cannot go start another three years, you know. But I'm not finished. I quit before that.

?: Not only graduate from high school, and then you, she continue college, but then she drop out of college.

S: Okay. Why did you drop out?

T: [Unclear]. It's Communist coming right, like everything hard. The family don't have much money to support, because a lot of kids, you know.

S: Oh, okay.

T: And I go to work and I meet him. He's a (--)

J: They use students too much for work.

T: That time he's the boss of Communist group, you know, to do something you know?

J: Too much, nobody don't want it.

T: But [unclear] the road, you know the road? How do you call?

J: Construction.

T: Construction, uh huh.

J: Construction, yah.

A: Construction of the roads?

S: Construction of the roads?

T: Yah, he'd be the boss of that group you know. And then I worked and I meet him over there. He'd be the boss of group, [the girls] over there, you know. [All laugh] And I meet him that time.

A: When the Communist took over did they, did they come against your family because your father was in the military before?

T: No, because he's retired already. (A: Okay) Yah, he's retired already.

S: What did you do for work? You said you worked, right, when you met him?

T: Hm, yah, I worked for how do you call, use money spend for the food in the group, you know. (S: Oh okay) Buy the food and everything.

Son: Oh, like accounting?

J: Yah, yah, yah, yah.

S: Accounting?

T: Umhm.

S: Okay.

T: Work with him.

S: Booking keeping and stuff like that.

T: Umhm. Work with him, and then with him, and then we live together. Yah, and we decide to stay together.

S: Now when did you get married? How long after you met?

T: Seven months we were together, right, and then we, we getting, yah. Stayed together and then (--)

J: Too quick. (Laughs)

S: Well you're still together. So.

T: And then we moved, 1977 we moved to Vientiane to his part, you know, Tha Khaek, Kham Muong, you know. Yah, we lived over there in Tha Khaek, like two years ago right?

S: Two years.

J: Two years, not two years ago. Two years.

T: After we escaped to Vientiane, ah, to Laos to Thailand. Yah. (Son: Probably son is speaking in Laos) Oh I pregnant, I pregnant him.

S: Is he your first child?

T: Yah, six months I'm pregnant. That time my husband escaped to Laos to Thai, I'm pregnant. They take me to the jail what, twenty-one months? No, twenty-one days.

J: Twenty-one days.

S: They took you to jail?

T: Twenty-one days at that time. Yah.

J: Not six months old, six months [unclear].

T: No, six months I pregnant.

J: Yah?

T: Yah. And then you escaped to Thai to, Laos to Thai (? Escaped), escaped Laos to Thai.

J: They take her go to jail twenty-one days.

T: Twenty-one months, twenty-one days in the jail.

Son: Because they were looking for, the Communist was looking for my dad.

S: Oh, so you two weren't together, going across together, right? You were separate?

T: No, he ran away.

S: He was already away.

T: Yah, he ran away. He leave me in Laos.

S: And they found you, and they wanted to know where he was, John was.

T: Yah.

J: Where him, where is he now?

S: So they took you and put you in jail for twenty-one days, three weeks.

A: So John, just back to you for a minute. You realized that the Communist were coming to look for you?

J: I escaped, yah. That's why I escaped from the Laos. I take my brothers, escape, another older brother, you know, take him out from the jail. He's real in the jail. I take him out. After I take him out, fifteen days they say, "Who take you out? Who's lying?" You know, like lie government sign him out. I sign him out.

A: So you told a lie to get your brother out?

J: Yes. That's why they try to (--)

N: He lie in the court. You know in the court they say the prison people have to get out. And his brother, my own brother, he's in jail already.

A: Not him?

N: Another one, it's [name unclear]. [All speaking at once.]

A: What's they other brother's name?

J: [Khum Chan]

A: [Khum Chan] Okay. And he was in the army as well?

J: Oh, long time.

N: A long time, long time.

?: 1945 he go to the army.

A: 1945?

J: Yes.

A: Oh wow. Wow. So you tried to get him, you got him out of jail by what? Did you fake, forge a document?

J: Yes. Yah, yah, fix name, yah, and name too, yah. And a number too.

N: They got the list. They leave the people get out from the jail. The list, the name, name, name, name, name, all the name come out, right? (A: Yup) Okay, his brother, my brother, my brother's name right here. He's out too.

A: At the bottom of the paper?

N: Yah, and he's stole the paper go in jail. "Okay, I want to pick up my brother." And they see the name. "Okay, you come out now." This guy drive car, take off and go to now. And this guy, they say, and service, religious, out too, because we are both. Now

on two brothers Laos civilian, doesn't matter, but military and the service, they kill. Go, leave.

J: That's why we want to turn you back, back [unclear] again. He knows. My family right, after the Communist take over, my family they can't go nowhere you know. 7:00 in the morning they open the door and let us know, you can go to work, that's it. At night they come around in my house, my father's house, they [unclear].

N: Like a jail!

J: Like a jail, my family. Like a jail.

N: Military our own house.

A: Just at your house?

J: Yes, my father's house.

A: Okay. Cause so many of the kids were in the military?

J: Umhm.

Son: No, but they escape.

A: Yah.

J: They think we are go back home, but we not.

S: Oh, so they're waiting for you to come back.

J: We go the other way.

A: All right. And so what month of what year did you guys (J: Come together?) yah. You got your brother out of jail, and right away did you leave to go to Thailand, as soon as you got your brother out of jail?

J: 1969, right?

N: Me, I escaped 1976.

J: '79

A: So you were earlier.

N: Yah, I'm early. I didn't go in jail because I know. I heard already some, my friend come to tell me everything that you have to go. You cannot stand by the Communist. You have to leave it.

J: So John, when you got your other brother out did you run away right then?

N: This, my brother, they almost kill him everyday, but just wait. They're waiting, waiting. He want to escape but young brother, own brother in jail. This guy no come yet. My own brother go in jail, very deep, because he's fighting back. He hit the Communist people on the front line when they fired they got the guy. That's bad news, they almost killed him, but they wait for the court. Say, pardon him.

A: Pardon him?

N: Yah, they would kill him. My brother lied to them, you know, for the jail at that camp. They got from the court, paper, court, sign it, put his stamp and go get it, run away. Escape.

A: And so when you got your brother out of jail you went to (J: Thailand) Thailand right away?

J: Yes.

A: And what did you tell your wife at that time?

J: I no tell her nothing.

T: I know nothing.

N: No tell nobody.

J: She don't know nothing. No tell nobody. That's why. I no tell her. See I just told her, okay, I go somewhere you know, go get something. You know, that's it. Okay, she say, "Okay."

N: No tell somebody.

J: No tell nobody. [All talking at once]

T: Yah, I stay alone in the house, in the house alone.

A: Okay. So back to you now that we understand what happened on this side. Tell us more about what happened to you going forward?

T: Oh, after they find out he's steal his brother from jail right, and then they know, they're looking for him. Yah, and they come to my house. I don't see him you know.

And then asked me, I say, "I don't know, because he go, he don't tell me at all," you know. "I don't know." That's why they say I know. That's why they take me to the jail. Yah, twenty-one days.

A: And where was the jail?

T: In the Tha Khaek, you know. Tha Khaek, yah. And ask me every day, every morning, at noontime you know. Two time a day ask me. "I don't know. How I say it, because I don't know," you know.

J: Sometime they come to lie to her too. He die already.

T: They say anything try me to speak up, you know. But how I speak up? I don't know, you know. He leave me, I don't know too. Until they, they don't make anything, they don't get anything from me, you know, and then they let me out. After that I live with, I go to my mother-in-law house, yah. And they heard about him. And then he tell someone to get me, you know. And then I come. Three month he leave me until he get, it takes someone to get me. He had three months. Until I'm waiting born baby everyday. Yah. I come one week, two week, right, stay with him in Thailand, because he lived in Thailand before, you know, a long time and then he stayed with him too. And then we come to Thailand, then stay together. And then we decide to come United States, you know, get in the camp. And then we moved into the camp. Only three days in the camp, I have a born baby. [All laugh] Yah.

A: When you were in jail did they give you enough food?

T: Um, no. We have someone to bring you food. They don't give you food. (A: Oh really) Yah, you have to, someone to give you food.

A: So who brought you your food, your family?

T: Ah, that time one is my what, god brother. (J: God brother) God brother, daughter, before I live close to her house, you know, they know me you know. And then they just bring the food for me everyday. Even my husband side cannot go close to me too, for scared you know. If his side goes close to me they think they're going to have some news to let me know something about him, you know. Let them know no one can go close to me at all that time.

A: And were there other women in this prison with you, or are you by yourself?

T: Oh have one more people. She's [Chinese]. She escaped to, she cannot escape because she's going to escape Laos to Thailand, but they caught her [unclear] you know, then they put her in same room me.

A: Okay. What happened to that woman?

T: Um, I don't know. Of course she speak Laos, but not good too, you know. She's a Chinese stay in Laos [unclear]. After that I out before her, and she still there. I don't know.

A: So why don't you folks (--) I have to leave right now. But why don't you folks and Sarah will continue the interview, tell us about you know, life in the camp and then how you ended up coming to Lowell. Okay. And thank you, and I'll talk to you guys again. Okay.

S: All right. So you went over to Thailand, and when was this again when you went over?

T: 1980.

S: 1980? Okay. And you were there for three days and then your son was born. (T: Umhm) And how was that? Did anyone help you when he was born?

T: We all, you know, his brother-in-law, yah. (S: Were there.) Yah, we stayed together and then they helped together.

S: And how long were you there in the camp total?

T: Three, (J: Three months) three months, something. Yah, almost four months. Yah, and then we have, we apply everything form to come to United States. And then we [unclear] come over here. And then we come United States in June 1980.

S: June 1980 you came here.

T: Yah, yah, until now.

S: Until now.

T: I have three kids in United States.

S: Oh, so you have three more that were born here?

[John and Ali are conversing in background, not easy to comprehend Sarah and Thongsouk)

T: Yah, three more in the United States. Yah, three more born in Lowell, Lowell General.

S: Lowell General, yah, just like my family.

T: That's the first city I come to the United States is Lowell.

S: Okay, so you guys came directly to Lowell?

T: Umhm.

S: And did you have family or friends here, a sponsor here?

T: Only Indo Chinese people, Laos American, you know. They have community, Laos American Community, you know, Indo Chinese, you know. Yah, bring the people here.

S: Oh okay. So you knew, but how did you connect with the people here though?

T: I don't know.

S: Do you remember?

J: Because we apply, come to United States. You know, they send the application, you know, come down here, they're going to sponsor us, something like that, you know. But they call [Unclear] Refugee, the community that sponsor us.

S: The Refugee Community?

J: Yes, they sponsor us.

T: But his two in California.

S: In California?

T: Yah, but he come visit me here.

S: Oh okay. He's visiting with you. And you've been here ever since?

T: I'm here since 1980.

S: Did you guys find, did you find Lowell welcoming to you? The Laos Community and everything, did you feel like you belonged, like you were welcomed here?

T: Yah.

S: Or did you have a hard time getting along?

T: No. They take care good, yah. Until I have a job. I come here in three months and I'm working, yah, until now.

S: Oh, what did you do for work?

T: First time I worked in the Prince Macaroni, Prince Macaroni.

S: Where is that?

J: Prince Macaroni.

T: Now they closed.

S: Oh, yah, yah, yes. Okay. Prince Pasta Spaghetti?

J: Yes.

T: Yah, and after that, now I work in MACOM.

S: Oh, MACOM?

T: Yah for almost twenty-years already in MACOM.

S: Really. What do you do there?

T: Electronic, microscope.

J: Testing.

S: Oh, the testing to make sure it works.

T: Umhm, yah.

S: Oh, that's interesting. And what did you do John for work when you came here?

J: Yah, I work in electronic too, microscope [ship], you know, [attack] ship attack or something, for the [Saicon] Electronic in Marlborough.

S: Oh in Marlborough? What is it? [Saicon?]

J: [Saicon] yah, [Saicon] Electronic.

S: Oh okay, yah. Let me just check and see if I have anything else, if I forgot anything. The only other thing I can think of is have you guys been, have you been back to Laos since you've been here?

T: Go visit, yah.

S: Yah. When is the most, well how many times?

T: Four times.

S: Four times since 1980? And what's the most recent time you were back? Did you go like a couple of years ago, or (--)

T: My last time (J: 2002), no, 2004 last time.

S: 2004, just a few years ago.

T: Yah. 2000, 2002, 2004.

J: and '91.

T: '91.

S: '91. So you waited about eleven years to go back the first time. When you went back did you take your whole family, or just the two of you?

T: First time only me and him, 1991. Second time me and her, me and him. Third time my kids go.

S: Yah. All of them? (T: Umhm) Oh that's good.

T: Last time, '04, altogether with two kids, my little two, sixteen years old, fifteen years old. Yah, they go with me.

S: Oh wow. Now what do you guys think of the country now? Have you seen a big change?

T: Yah, they have big change. Yah, a lot of people, more people. Yah.

J: But they still, for the people, they not change, they're the same, you know.

S: It's the same underneath.

J: Yah, the rules, yah, the rules, [Communist] the same. They just same house, you know, but they keep an eye on with you. Yah, they not [unclear].

S: You still feel kind of uncomfortable when you're there?

T: He just went there 1991, the first time. Only one time he came to Thailand, to Laos. The third time, second time, fourth time, he cannot go to Laos. (S: Really) Only me. He wait for me in Thailand for one month. (S: Oh okay) Every time I went there I stayed for a month.

S: Um, you go for a month. Why John, do you feel uncomfortable going back there again? Like someone is after you, or?

T: [Unclear].

J: They look already. You know, they look at me, you know, they (--) I don't feel comfortable you know.

S: Are the people there friendly?

J: Yah, yah, yah. We call them Laos over there you know. [Unclear] this time you know, most people there, they're smart now and people in United States. They go home, they go the (T: Embassy), yah, Embassy.

T: Now Embassy [unclear].

J: Report them, you know where you got to go. Where you got to go in. When you come back you have to go to report them. When last you not report them they're going to find out, "Where are you?" Like now you know. Embassy [unclear]. It's a good idea [unclear]. "Oh, I go my country." No, don't do that. Don't do that.

S: You have to be careful.

J: They not say you Laos, they say you American, you know. That not your country. They say this is Laos Country. You country over there, American. They say that?

S: Are you American citizens now?

J: Yes.

T: Not me.

S: Not you?

J: Try her too. I try and go you know, I try. But she, I don't know why she speak good.

S: Yah.

J: She learned about one hundred questions you know. She knows, she knows how to answer, but she say she's scared to write she say, you know.

T: I'm not good for the (--)

S: Oh with the writing part of it?

J: Yah, with the writing.

S: Oh I could help you. [Both laugh] I don't mind.

T: That's why it's hard for me to. You know, my kids, they say it too, they're going to help me, but I nervous.

S: Yah, I can understand that. I would be nervous too, but I'm sure you'd be fine. Do you have family still over there?

T: In Laos? All my family there. (S: Your family there) Only me and my family here.

S: Umhm. Okay. Well I think that's it. I'll shut this off.

T: Okay. Thank you too.

S: Thank you very much.

Interviews ends